

## Public Housing: Seattle Housing Authority

---

### Public Housing Improvements<sup>1</sup>

Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) is in the midst of several multi-year efforts to redevelop its four largest public housing communities – NewHolly, Rainier Vista, High Point, and Yesler Terrace. Fiscal year 2008 housing development activities are summarized below. Each redevelopment is much more comprehensive than can be described here. For more information on the redevelopments please see: [www.seattlehousing.org/Development/development.html](http://www.seattlehousing.org/Development/development.html).

### NewHolly

The rental housing portion of the NewHolly redevelopment in Southeast Seattle was concluded in 2005. SHA currently manages 400 public housing units and 220 other rental units at NewHolly, serving households with a range of incomes. In addition, SHA's nonprofit partners - Retirement Housing Foundation and Providence Health Systems - operate a 315-unit elder village. These buildings provide rental housing for seniors with a range of incomes and ability to live independently.

A few homeownership units are still in development in the second and third phases of NewHolly. By the end of 2008, all but 30 about of the planned 476 for-sale homes were complete. More than 100 homeownership units affordable to households with incomes below 80 percent of area median income were sold, including 31 homes developed by Habitat for Humanity.

### Rainier Vista

SHA manages 125 public housing and 59 tax-credit rental units in Rainier Vista Phase I, also in Southeast Seattle. In addition, Providence Health Systems operates Gamelin House, 78 units of low-income housing for seniors funded by a Section 202 grant. Housing Resources Group (HRG) operates 50 units in The Genesee – 22 units for people with disabilities funded through a Section 811 grant, 17 Rainier Vista replacement units for households with incomes below 30 percent of area median income, and 11 units of workforce housing.

Approximately 125 homes for sale were completed in Rainier Vista by the end of 2008, including 13 set aside for buyers with incomes below 80 percent of area median income. Land for 23 additional homes was sold on two sites in Phase I that were needed for stormwater detention while the light rail line was under construction. These sites were sold to Habitat for Humanity and the City of Seattle for use by Habitat for Humanity.

Phase II infrastructure development continued during 2008. SHA proceeded with planning and design for about 200 rental units for households with a mix of incomes. Construction of 83 of

---

<sup>1</sup>SHA is required to submit a comprehensive annual report to HUD on all agency activities and use of funds. This section of the CAPER is an extract of that report. The full report can be found on SHA's website at <http://www.seattlehousing.org/news/mtw/>.

these units (51 public housing and 32 tax credit) will begin in 2009 and come on line in 2010.

### **High Point**

By the end of 2008, SHA was operating 484 rental housing units in High Point in the West Seattle area. This includes 278 public housing–level and 205 tax-credit units. Providence Health Systems provides 75 units of Section 202 housing for low-income seniors at St. Elizabeth House. In July 2008 Holiday Retirement Corporation’s 160-unit market-rate senior building was finished. Residents began to move in soon after.

Upon completion of the remaining 116 rental units in April 2009, SHA-built rental housing at High Point will comprise 600 affordable rental units. Of these, 350 units will serve public housing–level residents. These units include 60 *Breathe Easy* homes specially designed to minimize the incidence of asthma in low-income families. The remaining 250 units will be rented to households earning 50 or 60 percent of area median income.

High Point currently includes approximately 250 home-ownership units in Phase I. Due to market conditions; land sales to private builders in High Point Phase II have been delayed. Habitat for Humanity has started on 12 units in Phase II.

### **Scattered sites portfolio reconfiguration**

In 2008, SHA continued to sell up to 200 public housing scattered site units and replace them with units that are more efficient to manage and maintain and better located to meet resident needs. In 2008, SHA:

- Sold 26 scattered sites units, bringing the total sales to 173 of the 196 units identified for disposition;
- Converted 13 two bedroom market rate units into public housing to serve as replacement units, bringing the total units replaced to 121.
- Continued relocation counseling for remaining tenants of units approved for disposition.

### ***homeWorks*, the public housing high-rise renovation program**

SHA is implementing the rehabilitation of many public housing high-rises by leveraging HUD capital subsidies with private investment. SHA’s intent is to rehabilitate major building systems and address deferred maintenance in about 22 high-rises in three phases. To that end, during 2008, SHA:

- Completed Phase II renovation in all seven buildings (the eight Phase I buildings were completed in 2007) and
- Substantially completed renovations in four of the seven Phase III buildings.
- The project is ahead of schedule and will be completed in 2009.

## Yesler Terrace

The redevelopment of Yesler Terrace is a key component in SHA's strategy to continue to serve Seattle's low-income residents. The SHA Board of Commissioners has made the redevelopment of Yesler Terrace a priority. The first step began in FY 2006 and concluded in fall 2007 with the adoption of guiding principles. The purpose of the guiding principles is to engage residents, immediate neighbors and the wider community in creating a vision for the new neighborhood. Important principles guiding the planning include but are not limited to the following:

- Every unit at Yesler Terrace will be replaced, one-for-one, in Seattle, if possible within or near the community.
- SHA expects to build a portion of the replacement units at Yesler Terrace.
- As part of the planning process, SHA established a Yesler Terrace citizens' review committee (CRC) of residents and other stakeholders. Residents are engaged through a series of community meetings that supplement the formal CRC meetings.
- Once it begins, redevelopment will most likely be accomplished incrementally, which would allow many Yesler residents to stay on site during the process.
- Residents required to move will receive relocation benefits and assistance finding housing.

In 2008 SHA began using these guiding principles to develop a site concept plan that addresses such issues as mixed uses, density, housing types, open space and financing. Step two of this process which will conclude in winter 2010 will mark the end of the planning process and the beginning of the land use entitlement process.

## Resident Initiatives - Employment

SHA's employment program, called *The Job Connection*, offers employment services at five offices: Yesler Terrace, Lake City (North Seattle), NewHolly, Rainier Vista, and High Point. Services include detailed intake assessment, life plan development, case management, placement assistance and follow-up for career upgrades. Multi-cultural and multi-lingual staff is representative of the communities they serve. To the right is a summary of The Job Connection's job placement outcomes in 2008.

Outcome	Number
Job Connection Enrollment	269
Enrolled TANF recipients	50
Enrolled Housing Choice Voucher participants	15
Total placements	205
Total regular placements	192
Total AWE placements*	9
Unduplicated placements	185
Average hourly wage	\$13.82
Benefits after probationary period	84%
Full time jobs as of hire date	76%
Six-month retention rate	76%
Raises or career advancement	8
Percent increase in wages	13%

*\*In the Adult Work Experience program (AWE), employment is for training purposes to advance employability while earning at least minimum wage.*

### Section 3 opportunities

“Section 3” is a federal requirement that work created by HUD-funded projects go, as much as possible, to residents and businesses in the project area. SHA employs a Section 3 coordinator to make the connections between contractors and Section 3 eligible individuals and businesses. Employment and business development outcomes in 2008 included:

- 40 Section 3 eligible individuals were placed either in construction jobs at High Point or in-house positions offered by SHA.
- 42 percent (253) of SHA’s 603 employees were Section 3 residents at the time SHA hired them.
- 80 Section 3 qualified businesses were added to the Small Works Roster, up from 44 the prior year.
- Three new businesses were Section 3 certified.

### Family Self-Sufficiency

The Family Self-Sufficiency program provides Housing Choice Voucher and public housing participants an opportunity to accumulate savings by establishing and accomplishing self-directed goals related to education, employment and home ownership. A savings account is established for participants and monthly deposits are credited to the account when the rent increases due to increases in earned income. Interim withdrawals from the savings account are available to assist participants in their efforts to accomplish their goals. In FY 2008, SHA competed for and was successfully awarded a renewal of its FSS case manager grants.

The Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program had 207 Housing Choice Voucher and 51 public housing participants as of the end of FY 2008, for a total of 258 FSS participants.

Of the 25 FSS graduates in FY 2008:

- 11 entered FSS without income from wages, but had employment income when they graduated.
- All of the graduates became independent of TANF and obtained employment.
- 14 participants with initial earned income increased their salary by the time they graduated.

As shown in the chart to the right, many graduates were well on their way toward economic self-sufficiency.

FSS household income as a percent of area median		
Income Group	On entry	On exit
< 30%	19	3
30%-50%	5	10
50%-80%	1	8
80%-100%	0	4

### **Tenant Trust Account Program**

The Tenant Trust Account Program (TTA) is designed to enhance residents' ability to become economically self-sufficient. SHA establishes a Trust Account on behalf of eligible households who choose to participate and set aside a portion of the household's monthly rent payment for deposit into the Trust Account. In 2008, SHA continued to enroll participants, assist them in identifying one or more goals that they are interested in pursuing while in the TTA Program, and provide information and referral to services in the community that will help them to reach their goals. As of the end of 2008, 301 residents were enrolled in the program. The average Trust Account balance was \$1,112 up from \$971 at the end of 2007. Four TTA participants purchased homes in FY 2008.

### **Community Building**

SHA relies on community building to increase resident self-sufficiency and connection to the greater Seattle community and sustain quality of life in SHA housing. SHA's six Community Builders promote collaborative relationships among service providers and neighbors who work together around common interests. In 2008, Community Builders partnered with community members, neighborhood organizations and service providers to promote engagement of individuals in their communities across economic, ethnic and age lines.

Support for neighbor-to-neighbor social networking such as Tea Time at Rainier Vista and Beacon Tower, coffee hours and community celebrations, collaborations with Seattle Neighborhood Group to provide crime prevention education, pedestrian safety groups at New Holly and High Point, multicultural communication committees at NewHolly and Rainier Vista, and walking groups at several high-rise served to revitalize communities. Community Builders also coordinated with Seattle King County Public Health staff to provide "Come Taste" cooking and nutrition classes in various high-rise public housing communities.

Work was done with community leaders to strengthen multi-cultural competence and inclusiveness in community councils and other leadership groups to address racism and other barriers to collaboration. In 2008 a resident-created translation and interpretation outreach tool in ten languages was provided to Duly Elected Resident Councils to support outreach efforts to non-English speaking residents. Ongoing interpretation services necessary to community participation in several communities resulted in a 59% increase in interpretation service utilization. The services provided made it possible for community members to participate meaningfully in redevelopment efforts at Yesler Terrace and in the creation of Duly Elected Resident Councils in several SHA communities. SHA and the resident councils used Resident Participation Funding to support all of these efforts.

The High Point Neighborhood Association, the governance body designed to facilitate resident leadership and increase community involvement and ownership of High Point, is steadily progressing. The newly elected Neighborhood Association trustees hold quarterly community meetings and have five neighborhood committees and developed a block watch program in 2008.

NewHolly community members have a different form of community governance than a

traditional neighborhood association. In 2008 NewHolly neighbors strengthened their system of topic-based volunteer action committees, quarterly Neighborhood Nights, summer block parties, annual community festivals, electing representatives to local and regional councils, and using a democratic budget system for their limited neighborhood activity funds.

### **Resident participation funds**

SHA signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the public housing duly-elected councils for the use of \$126,000 in Resident Participation Funds (RPF) and met with this group quarterly to plan and monitor activities. Funding was used for items similar to those in previous years (e.g., computers, office supplies, training, etc). Among the trainings that resident leaders participated in were: 50 resident leaders received training on eviction procedures; six resident leaders went to the Community Strategic Training Initiatives conference in Portland, Oregon; three residents participated in “Undoing Racism” training; and, one attended the Regional Equity Conference in New Orleans.

Also related to training, the duly elected resident council representatives also voted to use some of the RPF funding as a match to secure funding from the City of Seattle. As a result, a group of residents from duly elected councils received \$12,000 from the City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods Small and Simple Grant in the fall of 2008 for its SHARP (Seattle Housing Authority Residents Preparing) Project. The residents are learning to teach others about disaster preparedness and forming response teams with their neighbors with the help of several partner agencies.

### **Bridging the digital divide**

In 2008 SHA continued to partner with various community agencies to support three technology centers in or near SHA communities. SHA had three HUD Neighborhood Networks grants that support computer labs at Rainier Vista, Yesler Terrace and a special lab designed for people with disabilities at Center Park. Together, the labs served about 900 clients during FY 2008. They were operated in partnership with public and nonprofit agencies: Neighborhood House (Rainier Vista), Seattle Parks and Recreation/Associated Recreation Council (Yesler Terrace), and Digital Promise (Center Park).

The labs focus on access to the Internet and technology education via structured programs for people of all ages. The Rainier Vista provided ESL classes in collaboration with South Seattle Community College. The classes focused on learning English and basic computer skills. Courses are also provided in Cambodian and Vietnamese, with goals such as obtaining a GED and applying for citizenship. SHA also funds a computer lab at Westwood Heights, operated by Digital Promise, which focuses on structured programs and free Internet access for seniors.

In addition to SHA’s traditional support of computer labs, the residents of the public housing high-rise Jefferson Terrace have created their own lab, run by volunteers. In 2008 the Jefferson Terrace Computer Lab received a Bill Wright Technology Grant from City of Seattle in the amount of \$8,300. The funding will be used for computer classes, interpreters and drop-in lab time.